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ABSTRACT

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DECISION PROFILES OF MEXICAN-DESCENT FAMILIES

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ABSTRACT

An exploratory study of decision-making in families of Mexican heritage was carried out between February and July, 1974, in Phoenix, Arizona. A normative model of decision rationality and measurement (Family Problem Instrument - FPI) was adapted from previous research. The FPI posits the following decision phases: definition of problem by searching for causes and examining all elements of the situation; searching for and evaluating alternatives; using information to support other phases. Tape-recorded data were provided by twenty-seven families. Husbands and wives responded separately to family decision situations which were constructed and revised in several stages. Mexican-American members of the research team and advisory panel suggested adaptations at various stages.[1]

Inter-rater scoring reliability for the FPI decision dimensions was 70%. Results indicated that attained decision rationality levels varied by problem area, by decision dimension, and by family role. In general, families reached a middle level of decision rationality, as measured within the limitations imposed by a normative model of decision-making.

Based on the findings family profiles or case studies were constructed. These may be useful to those interested in understanding dynamics of decision-making in families of Mexican descent. The research explored possibilities of interdisciplinary-intercultural-intercommunity research effort. A caution is that results of the data analysis are tentative, and do not generalize to families beyond the study group.

[1]Special acknowledgement is due to Lydia Frausto who supervised field work and coded data; to Irene Frias who transcribed tape-recorded interviews; to Sally Pina who helped locate and reassure families; to interviewers Carlos Gonzales, Mary Jaramillo, Lincoln Orazun, and Molly Viegas; to advisory panel members, Albert Cerino, Margot Garcia, Conrad Martinez and Sally Pina; to Drs. Luis Casaus, Nelda Garcia and Beatrice Paolucci for helpful criticisms and suggestions. The author of this report assumes sole responsibility for its contents.

INTRODUCTION

One basic skill important to building human capital in today's society is the family's ability to make choices: to perceive and utilize available options or alternatives (Sussman, 1969; Boulding, 1972). Choice becomes increasingly complex as environments become complex; thus, understanding elements of choice behavior requires knowledge of interacting influences between decision-makers and environment (Elbing, 1961; Auerswald, 1971; Tallman, 1972). In this paper, situations perceived as problems by families of Mexican descent living in metropolitan Phoenix are interpreted as points of significant interaction. Decision behaviors in these areas are illustrated by excerpting from Decision Profiles of some families who provided data on resolution of the problems. An understanding of the dynamics of choice behavior among such families may aid family life practitioners in capitalizing upon, or strengthening, family competencies in relation to demands of urban systems.[2]

The 1970 Census data indicate difficulties for families of Mexican descent in their efforts to build human capital, that is, to provide the kind of family environment conducive to building productive skills, talents and knowledge which are essential human resources for future satisfactions and future earnings. In metropolitan Phoenix, for example, they constitute a sizeable group without full access to the social and economic mainstream, as reflected in lower income and education levels. Median Mexican-American family income is 24 percent less than that of the general metropolitan area family's income, with one out of five having income less than the poverty level. Only one-third of Mexican-Americans over the age of 25 years are high school graduates. Median years of education are 8.9 years compared to 12.3 years for the metropolitan population in general. A reported 77 percent of Mexican-American males are in blue collar occupations as compared to 53 percent of the total male work force in the metropolitan area, and they are concentrated in lower wage jobs.

In recognition that decision-making is a central process in families, with each unique choice representing a link in a long chain of patterned behavior, researchers have constructed normative decision models in order to conceptualize decision behavior of families and develop methodology for measurement (Halliday,

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[2]This project is an exploratory, pilot study based upon small, purposively selected samples of families characterized by their willingness to participate. The results, including the Decision Profiles, do not provide evidence which may be generalized to any population of families of Mexican heritage. In this matter, it is of the utmost importance that readers and users of these materials assist the researcher in maintaining the trust and goodwill of the study families, research staff, and other contributing members of the Mexican-American Community. In helping to assemble these richly qualitative data, some have expressed concern that the findings may be reinterpreted, reified and applied to all persons of Mexican heritage, thus perpetuating stereotyped images and attitudes (Romano, 1970; Morales and Murillo, 1971).

1964; Harries, 1972). Bustrillos (1963), investigating decision style of wives and mothers in Mexican-American families, found a variety of possible styles, with a tendency towards factual statements, present time reference, and personal preference ranking of alternatives. Research on family decision processes, including information processing, is in the stage of exploring models of decision behavior, instrumentation, family and culture-class variations (Schlater, 1969; Nichols, 1971).

PROBLEM, OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

Against this background the present study was developed. This first phase of the project has explored the question: what decision processes are effectively employed by some families of Mexican descent as they confront problems which may determine life satisfactions for them in a large urban center?

Specific objectives were:

1) to determine degrees of decision rationality for a purposive sample of families of Mexican heritage, operationalized as responses scored on five decision dimensions for selected situations: (Family Problem Instrument - FPI).

2) to determine variations in total decision rationality by family role (husband-father, wife-mother) and problem area.

3) to construct Family Profiles (case studies) which may be used as a basis for discussion, understanding and analysis of the dynamics of decision-making in families of Mexican heritage.

One method for indirectly measuring family decision outcomes is the model of family resources organized for goal achievement which demonstrated relationships between resources (a key element in decision) and status in Costa Rican families (Baker and Paolucci, 1971). In a family planning survey among rural Ladino families of Guatemala a Family Problem Instrument was developed which elicited responses to family decision situations (Baker, et al, 1973). These data were scored for decision-making rationality (use of decision dimensions) and results indicated significant differences in decision rationality by decision situation, sex role and status levels.

The Phoenix study has built upon these previous researches, utilizing a similar conceptual framework and semi-projective method of data collection through use of decision stories of importance to the families under study. The basic assumption underlying this research is that decision behavior elicited by the FPI corresponds to behavior which would be exhibited by the respondents in similar situations. The rationale for this assumption is that decision behavior (i.e., problem identification, search for alternatives) is learned behavior resulting from actual decision experiences.

The Research Team. Mexican-Americans, most of whom were undergraduate or graduate students at Arizona State University, composed the research staff. Their educational and professional backgrounds varied considerably, and included social welfare, home economics, business, counseling, adult and elementary education, Spanish and history. Four persons, active in the Mexican-American community, acted as an advisory panel to aid in revisions of the working of the FPI and letters of explanation to the families; to advise on how respondent families

might feel about interviews, to suggest how the Decision Profiles might be used.

Design and Sample. Research design incorporated three phases of instrument construction and revision, and data collection and analysis. Sixty-three persons of Mexican descent, living in the Phoenix, Arizona, metropolitan area, were involved in one or another of the phases:

Stage I: Informal, wide-ranging exploratory discussions with family members tape-recorded to generate areas of concern to families of Mexican descent for purposes of constructing trial decision situations. Respondents differing widely in age (21 to 66 years), holding one or more family roles (i.e., husband-wife, parent-grandparent, son-daughter), varying in life experiences (i.e., Mexican- or U.S.-born, reared and educated) and work histories, participated. Responses were content-analyzed, resulting in twelve trial problems.

Stage II: Trial decision situations and related questions to elicit decision behaviors were administered for the purpose of evaluating significance, meaningfulness and clarity. Ten families of Mexican descent (husband-wife pairs with school-age children, living in an inner city federal housing apartment complex) responded to questions about problems of the Martinez family, a family presented as being similar to theirs and with school-age children. Based on content analysis of these taped responses, six family problems were constructed for the FPI: a family trip to Mexico, concerns about family size, community problems and involvement, grade level for child in the family, family experses and need for wife working; illness of a child in the family.

Stage III: The FPI was administered. In order to control for responses based on immediate past experiences with the FPI, only families responded who had not participated in Stage II. Because all eligible families in the federal housing complex had already participated, new sources of respondents were investigated. Thirty-six persons (seventeen families and two wives whose husbands did not grant interviews) with school-age children and living for the most part in private homes in south Phoenix provided the data.

Data Analysis. The data were transcribed verbatim and then the transcriptions were monitored in order to maintain reliability of the task. The scoring system developed for the Guatemalan FPI data was used; conceptual equivalence of the decision dimensions was maintained although some differences developed in operational or substantive definitions. For example, cultural experience, knowledge or belief became a component of the decision dimension called Inquiry and Use of Information specific to the data from these families of Mexican descent (Baker 1973, 1974).

One hundred representative items were independently scored by this researcher and the Mexican-American research assistant and discrepancies discussed until we were able to average 70 per cent consistency in scoring agreement. Following this, the assistant was responsible for scoring the data, although frequent discussions were held to clarify questions. Ten per cent of the respondents were reinterviewed approximately two months later to check on interviewing and respondent consistency. Examination of this data indicated qualitative similarity of first and second responses.

Coded data were summarized for total scores on decision dimensions, total scores on problems and total individual and family scores. These measures are reported as means scores in Tables 1 and 2. Because of the exploratory nature

of the study and limited size of the sample, statistical analysis was not thought to be appropriate.

After studying decision scores and family characteristics of the total sample, selections of individual families for Decision Profiles were made. Selection criteria were: 1) all types of families by birthplace of parents must be represented, that is, there would be some families in which both parents were born in Mexico; some in which only one parent was Mexican-born; and some in which both parents were U.S.-born; 2) included would be both families scoring high on total decision scores and some scoring below the mean for the total sample; 3) there would be some families in which husbands and wives appeared to be in agreement on decision processes and others in which there were differences; and 4) families would differ on educational, occupational and income resources (Table 2 and Appendix A).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Families. Place of birth (Mexico or the United States) suggests basic differences in life experiences which may shape value and behavior patterns (Grebler, 1970). Among the twenty-seven families, seven couples were natives of Mexico; ten couples were born and reared in the United States; ten couples had one member Mexican-born and one U.S.-born.

The ten Stage II families (those living in the urban federal housing complex) were earning an average of $6,300 per year ($2,000 to $12,000 range); most were skilled-worker families. None of the wives were employed and two husbands were not working. Husbands and wives both averaged 36 years of age (range of 22 to 50 years), and both averaged 5 years of school (range of 0 to 13 years). Families had a mean of 4.5 children (range of 3 to 10) and 85% of the children were in school.

The seventeen intact families of Stage III (those living mostly in private dwellings on the Phoenix southside) were earning $2,100 more per year: an average of $8,400 (range of $3,000 to $15,000). Ten families were skilled-worker families; two were professional, four were unskilled and one was not working. Five wives were employed. These couples were older: husbands averaged 46 years of age (range of 37 to 63 years) and wives 42 years (range of 21 to 56 years). Education levels were higher: husbands averaged 9 years of school (range of 0 to 16 years) and wives 8 years (range of 2 to 12 years). Family size was slightly larger (4.8 children per family, ranging from 2 to 12 in number), and, again, 85% of the children were in school.

Decision Rationality: An Illustration. Evidence about decision rationality, a major focus of the study, is found in Table 1, which reports mean scores for decision categories by the six situations of the FPI. The decision dimensions have been ordered in the table as they usually are found in normative models of decision making (Halliday, 1964; Millar and Starr, 1967). The first two pertain to defining the problem to be decided; the next two describe phases concerning generation of alternatives or courses of action; the last, to using information to support development of choice in the other phases of decision-making.

The highest score which could be assigned to a category was three. Table 1 shows that no total mean score reached this upper-limit score; the nearest to this were the Number of Alternatives and Whole Response decision dimensions. Lowest

Table 1

Continuum of Decision Rationality
(Variations in Decision Dimensions by Family Decision Situations; Mean Scores; N = 34).

"Most Rational" ⟶ ⟵ "Least Rational"

Dimensions	Situations: Trip to Mexico	Family Size	Com. Involvement	School Grade Level	Economics and Work	Illness and Operation	Mean Scores All Situations
Whole Problem Response	1.82	2.00	2.15	1.59	2.08	1.44	1.85
Diagnosis of Problem	1.06	1.50	0.59	0.76	0.79	0.24	0.82
Number of Alternatives	2.32	1.53	2.20	1.82	1.88	1.73	1.91
Ranking of Alternatives	1.79	1.65	1.67	1.97	1.65	1.32	1.68
Use of Information	2.15	1.76	1.79	1.94	1.26	1.65	1.76
Total Score All Dimensions	9.14	8.44	8.40	8.08	7.66	6.38	8.02

total mean score was found for Diagnosis of the Problem. With five decision categories, fifteen would be the highest total score for an individual respondent, and a mean score of fifteen the highest score for a family on any one problem.

At this point I quote from the Jimenez family to illustrate the normative model. We will use the Trip to Mexico situation and the combined responses of Manuel and Carolina Jimenez in our example. The Jimenez had a mean score of eleven, and this would be considered at a fairly high level of decision rationality in comparison to other family scores on this situation. (Their total mean scores are compared to those of other Profile families in Table 2.)

Here is the situation and responses as presented in the Jimenez' Decision Profile:

Table 2: Decision-Making of Eight Profile Families
(Family Role Variations; Mean Scores)

Profile Family	Role: Husband/ Father	Role: Wife/ Mother	Mean Family Score
Benites	9.67	7.00	8.33
Chavez	6.67	6.83	6.75
*Jimenez	8.67	9.00	8.84
Munoz	6.17	9.17	7.67
*Ramirez	7.67	7.17	7.42
*Rodriguez	3.67	13.17	8.42
Rosario	7.00	4.33	5.67
*Salazar	9.67	9.83	9.75
Mean Score	7.40	8.31	7.86

*Profiles in Appendix A

> "The family is planning a trip to Mexico to visit relatives, but Mary, the oldest daughter, doesn't want to go. She reminds her mother and father that she doesn't speak Spanish, and, anyway, she doesn't like Mexico because of its poverty."

Whole Response, the first decision category, refers to the extent to which respondents mention all components of the situation as it is presented and whether or not they generalize some aspect outside of the immediate context to other families, times or places. For instance, Manuel and Carolina mention the family outing to Mexico, daughter's reluctance to go and the two reasons why. In addi-

tion, Carolina explains bilingual-bicultural experience as a concern which is not limited to the Jimenez family:

> "The majority of children born here in the United States, but of Mexican descent, they really know Spanish; they speak it and love it."

In the second decision category, Diagnostic Orientation, causal statements are examined, that is, the extent to which underlying motives or reasons leading up to the situation are presented. Carolina diagnoses her daughter's reluctance to make the trip in this way:

> "Saying Mexico is poor is no excuse; that's ignorance on her part. And the idea about not speaking Spanish is just an excuse also, because she understands it."

For the third decision dimension, Number of Alternatives, various means-ends combinations or courses of action for solving the problems are presented. Thus, the Jimenez perceive the following alternatives:

> "Help her to see that it's not necessary to speak Spanish to go.
> "Tell her that Mexico isn't really poor.
> "She needs to be educated about the country; so take her to a library or show her photos.
> "If she were old enough we could leave her with her grandparents or even by herself.
> "Well, she really should go; we'll all go together."

Comparing or Ranking Alternatives, the fourth decision category, includes statements about advantages or disadvantages of alternatives or courses of action. Decision makers may compare, evaluate or rank alternatives in terms of the likelihood of certain consequences or outcomes occurring. For instance, Manuel Jimenez puts alternatives into a one-two order when he says that the first thing is for Mary to understand that she doesn't have to know Spanish, and, secondly, she should be told that Mexico isn't poor. The outcome of educating her about Mexico can only be positive, as Manuel says: "She'll really understand Mexico then." Advantages which might result if she goes to Mexico are:

> "She'll want to speak Spanish. And she'll see for herself the real thing there: the life of the people, their customs; the reason, perhaps, for the poverty."

Finally, Carolina specifies "the best" alternative when she says:

> "...we can all go together. It's most important for the whole family to be together; that's the objective of the trip. This is what's most needed!"

Sources of information and their possible use in setting up alternatives or courses of action to follow comprise the last decision dimension (Inquiry For and Use of Information). Information sources include experimental proof (trial and error); observation; personal experience; authoritative and known sources (such as competent relatives, literature, institutions); and specific cultural knowledge or

belief. Observation as a source of information is illustrated by the Jimenez' statement that "She'll see for herself the real thing." Cultural experience or belief as information source is represented by several responses of Manuel and Carolina, for example:

> "I'm going to tell her it isn't Mexico that's poor; it's the other countries.
> "The country is culturally very rich.
> "There are very beautiful places to visit."

Decision Rationality Across Problem Areas. In Table 1, the problems to which the families responded are arranged in the order of the size of total sample mean scores, from Trip to Mexico with the highest (9.14) to Illness and Operation with the lowest (6.38). This arrangement of problems suggests a "continuum of rationality," with decision-making about the Trip to Mexico being"most rational" (Diesing, 1955, 1961; Halliday, 1964). Examination of decision dimension scores suggests that "high rationality" implies, at least for these families, emphasis on generating alternatives (score of 2.32) using information from the complex environment (score of 2.15), and perhaps, diagnosing the causes of problems (score of 1.06 and, on the Family Size problem, 1.50). Low rational decisioning" as operationalized by problem scores on the right side of the table, seems to be dependent upon not only lower overall scores, but specifically upon low scores on diagnosis (score of .24 on the Illness problem), evaluating and ranking alternatives (score of 1.32), and perhaps, looking at all aspects of a problem (score of 1.44).

Interpretations can be suggested for size and arrangement of total scores by problem area. The Trip to Mexico may be the situation most uniquely identified with by these families of Mexican descent, and perceived as both an important cultural as well as personal experience; thus perhaps, they have been most consciously trying to work out satisfying solutions for it. The Family Size and Community Involvement problems are probably situations which the families have already met and dealt with successfully; the high scores on Whole Response suggest they have considered all sides of these questions.

On the other hand, the remaining three problems are closely linked to complex social cybernetic (control) systems (i.e., education, economics, government and health) and much of the rationality of decision behavior may depend upon rules or policies of the systems, and not on the families themselves (Auerswald, 1971). Another possibility may be, as Diesing would suggest (1955, 1961), that these decisions are "non-rational" in nature, meaning that there is insufficient information as well as elements of conflict and uncertainty which families cannot resolve within a framework of normative decision making. The outcome of a serious operation, spiraling inflation, and class placement in school may represent such uncertainty and conflict-producing elements. Thus, it may be that the families generally are "as rational" as they can be, given the circumstances surrounding these serious situations. These findings are supported by earlier research (Baker, et al, 1973), in which significantly higher decision scores were obtained for problems in which families had long experience, easily accessible information and certainty of outcome, and lower scores obtained for problems in which information was not available or forces outside the family were in control of the situation.

Two illustrations from the Decision Profiles may help to clarify "non-rational" responses for the situations in which families received low total mean scores.

We will be discussing the Ramirez and the Rodriguez families; Table 2 shows their relative placement among the eight Profile families on total mean scores. At this point we are interested in their decision behavior regarding the situations at the "low rationality" end of the decision continuum.

Ramirez Family. Family mean score for the Illness and Operation situation was six, slightly lower than that for all sample families (Table 1). Carlos Ramirez contributed twice as much to this score as did his wife, Ester. In this situation:

> "One of the Ramirez' sons, Jaime, had to have an operation but he didn't get much better after it. Now the doctor says he can't tell Carlos and Ester for sure that Jaime will be any better if he has a second operation right away."

Carlos and Ester, in discussing the problem, do not refer to all aspects of the situation (Whole Response); they do not talk about the doctor, for instance. However, they do suggest that, with children, some things apply regardless of the family or situation:

> "Kids are smart; you can't fool them very long;" and: "With children you never know what may happen."

There is no attempt to diagnose likely causes or reasons for the situation having arisen. Alternatives suggested by Carlos are:

> "Have faith that Jaime will come out of the operation OK.
> "Talk to him, tell him there is hope, convince him that he'll be better soon after the operation.
> "I'll try to pray for him, that he gets better."

Ester adds:

> "Tell him exactly what's going on, set him straight on what's going on."

Ranking or Evaluating Alternatives is suggested by these comments from Carlos:

> "It's best to talk to him; this is most important.
> "Really, the only solution there is that'll help him (is) prayer."

And from Ester:

> "I think it's best for the boy to know."

Information Sources to which the family turns in the face of this situation are suggested in these responses:

> "It's hard for a father to hear that his son isn't getting any better." This observation suggests perhaps a talk with the doctor. Then, Carlos says: "For me, trying to be a good Christian, I'll try to pray for him;" suggesting reliance on a belief system to help in formulation of a solution. Ester refers to herself and Carlos as sources of information: "Well, we'll have to tell the boy the truth; we can't have him believe otherwise."

This pattern of responses may be interpreted as indicating emotional conflict and uncertainty, as well as the presence of many forces outside of the parents' control. In view of these factors, the rational model of decision-making finds little application in the Jimenez' responses.

Rodriquez Family. In contrast to the Jimenez, the Rodriguez family has a total mean score on another situation at the low end of the rationality continuum (Economics and Work) which is above the mean score for the total sample of families (a mean of nine compared to 7.66, Table 1). Most of the family score can be attributed to the wife, Juanita Rodriguez, who has an individual score of 14 on this problem. Although she shows very high rationality as defined by the decision model of the study, she also shows, in her pattern of responses, a clear recognition of elements of conflict and uncertainty in the situation, and appears to suggest that the situation calls for first, a process of bringing together a number of alternatives, of mediating a new course of action out of a number of possibilities. According to Diesing (1955, 1961), this suggests "more-than rational" behavior, or social, integrative decision processes, and not sole reliance on the classic decision model which assumes absence of conflict in values or goals among the decision participants, and calls for selection - rejection of alternatives. Here is the economic problem:

> "The family's income, $8,000 per year, has not increased during the year but prices of everything have risen. Besides this, Victor and Juanita are trying to make payments on furniture which they've bought on time. To get more income, both of them might work but if they do they won't have much time to be with their little girls."

You may read the Decision Profile for the complete set of responses (Appendix A); here is the section which indicates Juanita's recognition of "extra-" or "non-" rational elements in the situation:

> "We have to combine our efforts to make a little more. It has to be done in such a way that no one is inconvenienced- the children or the house - and so there's no trouble between Victor and me. So we are in agreement - so it's not something I want but my husband doesn't. It's very hard if one is complaining in one way or another, or there's a disagreement between husband and wife. I've seen this in other families...I know wives and husbands who both work and have children. And on many occasions the husband is at home when the wife is working so there's no problem. This way the husband gets the chance to get involved with the children and cope with their problems - many times they have no idea what this is like. They come home from work and they don't know what the children have been doing all day or even part of it. Then if the children shout he doesn't like it, true? But when fathers are with their children a while they understand all about this and they have a part in directing their children. So it's possible to find a way to help each other."

Variations in Decision Rationality by Family Role. Table 3 presents comparative scores of all Stage III husbands and wives on the six problems. There is almost no difference in total mean score for the two family roles. However, some differences emerge when individual problems are considered. Indicated for the wife/mother are slightly higher scores for the two problems at the "more rational" (left) side of the table. The Trip to Mexico problem concerns a daughter; perhaps mothers

Table 3: Variations in Decision-Making by Family Role and Decision Situation

Role	Trip to Mexico	Family Size	Community Involvement	School Grade Level	Economics and Work	Illness and Operation	Mean Score All Situations
Husband/ Father (N = 17)	9.06	8.12	8.71	7.82	8.00	6.65	8.05
Wife/Mother (N = 17)	9.23	8.76	8.12	8.35	7.35	6.12	7.99

feel more affected by the personal relations involved than fathers and are slightly more motivated to resolve the situation. They may also have more responsibility for socializing to cultural values in these homes. Perhaps the Family Size problem is somewhat more often viewed as "their" responsibility to take care of, although it may be the husband's actual decision. An example of this occurs in the Salazar Decision Profile. The family mean score for the Family Size situation is eleven, with Anna Salazar contributing slightly more than her husband, Ramon. The score difference is probably not important or may be an artifact of the scoring procedure itself. What is interesting here is that while maintaining strongly rational decision behavior contrary to the total sample, Mrs. Salazar does not assume a dominant role position. At the same time, both Anna and Ramon emphasize their independence from influence of the grandparents in matters pertaining to family size. This is the situation and analysis of the couple:

> "Pedro and Blanca Inez, the grandparents, will often say: 'For a family, life is lost if there aren't many children around.' Ramon and Anna know what their desires are: to have more grandchildren; but with the family they already have (16-year-old Rita, 11-year-old Eddie and 6-year-old Miguel) Ramon and Anna don't care to have any more children."

It is Ramon, as he points out, who provides the financial support for the family, and it is he, as Anna points out, who should decide on the number of children in the family. The Salazars see themselves as responsible for the security of their immediate family first, and the immediate family does not include the grandparents, Anna insists. As she explains it, the opinions of grandparents are to be respected but they are a family apart and ought not to say much, that it, should not interfere. . Except for the school situation where, again, perhaps the mother is assuming more routine responsibilities for decision, the husband/father seems to be engaged in confronting societal systems (community, economics and health); perhaps he is more accustomed to doing this because of his greater participation in systems exterior to the family (Grebler, 1970). Differential scores were also found among the rural Guatemalan families who responded to a version of the FPI constructed with problems important in their environment (Baker, et al, 1973). Husbands were "more rational" in the sense of having significantly higher scores on three of four decision situations, including a problem dealing with child dilcipline. Wives in the Arizona families of Mexican descent seem to be reflecting a more active participation in decision-making, in the sense that

they score as well as or higher than their husbands on some problems. In line with the increasing complexity of urban society, they are quite likely being called upon to fill expanded managerial roles in the family and they are meeting the challenge (Grebler, 1970; Harries, 1970; Auerswald, 1971; Boulding, 1972).

Decision Profiles. The families selected for the Decision Profiles were from among the Stage III families only. Table 2 presents true total scores computed for families and for individuals in each family. Average total score for everyone is slightly below that for all Stage III individuals (7.86 compared to 8.02, Table 1). Five families have at least one member with average score greater than that for Stage III individuals. Three families have one or both members with lower scores. In the Rodriguez family the couple has scores indicative of the range of scores found among all families. Thus, as a group the Profile families are fairly representative of Stage III families in variety of decision-making rationality levels attained.

In four families, average scores of both husband and wife are fairly equal; in the others the scores of the marital pair indicate that probably one person is the stronger decision-maker of the family. In two cases this individual is the husband and in two cases it is the wife.

Responses to all six situations of the FPI were not presented for any of the families. An attempt was made to select responses and problems to emphasize variety and range of decision processes employed or to provide illustrations of similar processes used by both spouses and illustrations where the processes seemed to differ within a family. Four of the profiles, in whole or in part, have been reproduced in Appendix A of this paper. I would be most interested in how these cases might be used in the future.

SUMMARY

This paper has described a pilot project to study decision-making among families of Mexican descent. Some interpretations of the data have been offered in order to illustrate how the resulting qualitative Decision Profiles may be used to understand the variety of family decision patterns. No attempt has been made to generalize to a population of families of Mexican heritage; the modest size and purposive nature of the sample precludes this.

From a research point of view, the study requires replication with a randomly selected representative sample, should it be desirable to generalize. In future studies consideration might be given to professional families, to younger or retirement-age families, to adolescent members of the family. An interdisciplinary, intercultural research effort, such as that reported here, is time-consuming and difficult, but rewarding in the sense of sharing in the discovery of meanings. Interpretations and adaptations of the FPI were made in this study. It is likely that the sample of decision scores is sufficiently large (175 on each decision dimension) and varied in range to allow for a conservative claim to be made for content validity and minimum reliability of the FPI as a conceptual and analytical tool.

The Decision Profiles appear to lend themselves to various applications: to case analyses by university and high school students; to formal or informal bilingual adult education projects in which samples of the everyday expressed concerns of families might be useful instructional materials; to counseling situations with individuals or families.

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APPENDIX A

DECISION PROFILE 1: THE JIMENEZ FAMILY

Manuel Jimenez, 36 years of age, works for a company that makes electronics equipment in Phoenix. He was born and raised in Mexico and completed his high school education there. His wife, Carolina, 34 years of age, was also born and raised in Mexico and completed high school there. The Jimenez family has five children who are 2, 4, 6, 9, and 14 years of age. Income is about $8,000 per year.

School. When their six-year-old son, Luis, began school this year the teachers put him in a class of children who are slow learners. Manuel and Carolina see that the youngster has now advanced more than the others. Luis says he always finishes his school work before they do. As far as he is concerned, Manuel says, "I think they put him in with children who aren't very smart. This is sure a problem. So, since we can see he's doing so much better than they are, we're going to go see those in charge of the school and do what we can to get them to put him in a better group, a smarter group. Nothing else is sufficient. If they won't do it, he'll just have to work a little harder and advance even more. But we'll help as much as we can; no matter what sacrifices we have to make. We don't want him to remain at an average level. We want him to continue getting ahead."

Manuel continues: "The teachers, I think, are those who, in reality, know the most about Luis' achievement in school. They should be able to explain to us. We'll have to get in touch with them, and have an agreement about what's the best thing to do to help Luis. Many times parents try to help their children but they don't have the experience to do it, so they really can't help their own children. It's better if they don't try if they lack the preparation themselves. In this case it's the teacher who can help out. Yes, it's most important for us to get in touch with the teacher and decide how to help Luis. The teacher can tell us in what way we can help the boy to be able to achieve, and we can then be a real help to him here at home."

Carolina Jimenez refers first to the school and teacher: "We have to get information at the school from the teacher, about why they put Luis in that class. There must be a reason. Then we have to know how they know if the child has done better than all the rest. Right now he says he finishes his work before everyone else. Well, it also depends on how he does the work! If he's in a big hurry, racing through it, and doesn't correct his errors, he doesn't learn much. Or if he finishes it all right, then I'm going to suggest another thing--that he get a book and read while everyone else is finishing. The only thing is, I'll repeat it, that we have to go and find out for sure for ourselves from the teachers why he's in that class that they consider a lower level one. This is most important, the reason why they have him in that class."

NOTE: Names have been changed and data pertaining to family and status characteristics have been slightly altered in order to maintain the privacy of the "real" families.

Illness. The Jimenez' nine-year-old son, Carlito, had an operation after a serious illness, but he didn't get any better. Now the doctor tells the parents that he can't give them any assurances that their boy will get over the problem if he has another operation right away. As far as he is concerned, says Manuel: "If this doctor is a specialist in this kind of surgery, then we'll take his word for it. We'll wait and see what Carlito's reactions are later. If the doctor says he's not going to get better with more surgery, there's no reason to have more; maybe Carlito would just be exposed to a greater danger. I don't think we should do anything but wait. Yet we do everything we can: follow the doctor's orders (if he's a competent medical man). This is all that can be done--it depends on the doctor."

Then Carolina says thoughtfully: "First thing the doctor says our Carlito won't get better if he has another operation immediately, but if we wait a little while and then consult with the doctor again, maybe then the diagnosis will be different. That's what happened to me once. You have to have patience. Even the most simple operation requires time for the results to show. You just make things worse by looking for other solutions or talking to the doctors again. It's vital to follow the doctor's advice and wait out the time the doctor says is needed for the child to recuperate."

Trip to Mexico. The family is planning a trip to Mexico to visit relatives but Mary, the oldest daughter, doesn't want to go. She reminds her mother and father that she doesn't speak Spanish, and anyway, she doesn't like Mexico because of the poverty. Manuel wants her to understand that it's not necessary to speak Spanish to go to Mexico. "That's the first thing," he says, "and secondly, I'm going to tell her it isn't Mexico that's poor. It's all the other countries."

"I believe we'll do all we can to get her to go and then she'll see for herself the real thing there--the life of the people, their customs; the reason, perhaps for the poverty; we'll do all we can so she understands. It'll help a lot to take her to a library or show her some photographs. What's most important is to educate Mary a little about Mexico. Help her be ready so she can really see and understand the country."

Thinking over this situation, Carolina comments: "Well, if the child were old enough we could leave her with her grandparents or by herself. But saying Mexico is poor is no excuse, that's ignorance on Mary's part. The country is culturally very rich. And the idea about not speaking Spanish is just an excuse also, because she understands it. And that's what's important. If she'd go she'd understand and then she'll want to speak Spanish. The majority of children born here in the United States but of Mexican descent, they really know Spanish; they speak it and love it. We're going to talk to Mary and try to convince her that there are many very beautiful places she can visit. I think if we try very hard we'll convince her and we can all go together. It's most important for the whole family to be together; that's the objective of the trip. This is what's most needed!"

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DECISION PROFILE 2: THE RAMIREZ FAMILY

In the Ramirez family, both husband and wife are working full-time. Their efforts provide a yearly income of $14,500 for the household: the parents and seven children. Carlos and Ester Ramirez are native Arizonans. Carlos, at 41 years of age, is a university graduate with a degree in secondary education. He teaches 10th grade history and social science in a Phoenix high school. His wife, Ester, at 39 years of age, is a busy person as office worker in an industrial plant as well as wife and mother. She is a high school graduate. Four of the Ramirez children are in grade school and the others are in high school.

Community. Although the family isn't highly involved with the neighborhood, they see evidences of stealing and fires and use of marijuana here and there. Carlos observes that, "It would really be good to know different families living in different parts of the area, not only because of these problems but to have friends. However, speaking of the problems around here, I'd say we need to talk to people and discuss them and try to be more careful. If we see somebody around here who needs help we can try to help out in whatever way is possible--in getting a license for a car, for instance. This kind of thing would help all of us."

Ester thinks over the situation and says: "Well, we try to set a good example for our kids and tell them right from wrong: what smoking marijuana does to you; what trouble you get into stealing; the consequences and how you pay if you do things like that. We talk to them constantly, watch out for them and don't let them go off without us. Also, we report things we see going on--that's doing the kids a favor. It's so true that things are terrible nowadays. It's better for kids to be reprimanded early--before they get out of hand. Parents should try to be close to their kids and know exactly what they're doing at all times. You can't say: 'Well, it's all right for my kids.' You can't take them for granted--you never know what they are going to be up to next!"

Family Size. The grandparents in the family, when Carlos and Ester take the children to visit, will often say: "Life isn't worth living without lots of children." Carlos and Ester realize the older folks' desires, but they already have their family and they don't want more children. Says Carlos: "Well, this problem is a little bit difficult, but for sure there are solutions for everything! First, about having many children--well, one wants to live! For example, I've got lots of children--it's a big family. My brothers and sisters are also married but they've limited their families. It's a personal thing. I really think if a husband and wife are happy with the children they've got and don't want more so they can do well by those they've got--give them a better education, better things in life, that perhaps that's the answer for them. In the situation we've got here, the best thing for us is to try to remain united as a family and not separate ourselves off from the rest of the family. Family unity is what life's about."

Ester is thinking about parents and grandparents: "It's up to us parents, not the grandparents. I mean, it's our life, it's what we want to do; it can't be dictated to us. We'll have to tell the folks that it's our marriage, not what they want. Well, you know, life's hard with a bunch of kids. There are blessings but lots of hardships too. In time, everything works out. It's really our business, nobody else's, what we do."

Illness. One of the Ramirez' sons, Jaime, had to have an operation but he didn't get much better after it. Now the doctor says he can't tell Carlos and Ester for sure that Jaime will be any better if he has a second operation right away. Carlos shakes his head and says: "It's hard for a father to hear his son isn't getting better after a thing like that. For me, I think, well, we have to have faith that Jaime will come out of the operation OK. We'll try to talk to him, to help him however we can and tell him there is hope for the operation, that he'll get better quickly. I believe it'll be best to talk to him, to convince him that he'll be better soon after the operation, hopefully. For me, trying to be a good Christian, I'll try to pray for him, that he gets better. This is really the only solution there is in the world that'll help him--prayer."

Jaime's mother thinks of her son: "Well we'll have to tell the boy the truth; we can't make him believe otherwise. You know, we'll just have to come out with it. Because . . . I mean, kids are smart; you can't fool them very long. We're going to have to sit down with Jaime and talk it over; tell him exactly what's going on. This is the most important thing for us to do--set him straight on what's going on. I mean, if he's not going to be any better, I think it's best for the boy to know. With children, you never know what may happen."

Trip to Mexico. Another time the family decided to go to Mexico to visit some relatives there but their oldest daughter, Natalia, didn't want to go. She told her parents that she didn't like Mexico because it is so poor and, besides, she couldn't speak Spanish.

Her father thought it would be worthwhile to talk to her to try to convince her to go see what Mexico truly was like. In that way, she'd learn that there isn't just the poverty but also the riches and the culture of Mexico. Carlos felt that in this way she'd learn and she'd see that all these things exist in Mexico and perhaps she would then finally go with them. That was most important from Carlos' point of view. In this way, there would be more understanding among everyone and they would all feel better about making the trip.

For her part, Ester said: "I encouraged Natalia to go. I couldn't leave her behind because she was a young kid. I didn't have any sisters or anybody I could leave her with except my mother and that would have been too much responsibility for her. Anyway, Natalia's my daughter and she's my responsibility, so she went with us.

"Also," Ester continued, "we could try to teach her Spanish so she can understand it better there, you know. We'll encourage her. Really I don't think Mexico's so poor. I think it's very rich. It's got a lot to see. That time I knew that Natalia would really enjoy it. Yes, I think we really should teach her Spanish. I tell her all the good things about Mexico. It's our responsibility to see to what's best for her. So in that instance we tried to persuade her to go--I wanted to have her with me rather than leave her behind."

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DECISION PROFILE 3: THE RODRIGUEZ FAMILY

Victor and Juanita Rodriguez are the parents of two daughters, ages 5 and 11 years. Victor, 41 years old, works for Maricopa County as a grounds foreman. Juanita, 38 years of age, busies herself with family and home affairs. Both she and Victor were born and educated in Arizona; she finished the 10th grade and Victor obtained a general equivalency diploma several years after they were married.

Economic Situation. The family's income, $8,000, has not increased during the year but prices of everything have risen. Besides this, Victor and Juanita are trying to make payments on furniture which they've bought on time. To get more income, both of them might work but if they do they won't have much time to be with their little girls. Victor says: "It's hard to say exactly what we will do. I guess each family has to find its own solutions, depending on the family; it's a little difficult to say what's possible to do."

For her part, Juanita admits: "This is a delicate situation--financial matters--isn't it true? Now people are very much accustomed to both husband and wife working. Many times expenses are so high that both work so they can at least have some comforts. But also many times discord arises when the wife has her money and the husband his, isn't that so? One begins to think, 'It's my money because I earned it. This is mine and that's yours.' So dissension sets in and then the children don't get the careful attention they should have...If I am in the house I know what time they come from school, where they go or what they're doing. When I'm in the house I'm in charge of the kids. But also, as I say, when the children are in school, one could get work, but no more than part time. But only if they are in school and you know for sure they're all right at school. Then a wife like myself, because we really need the money I could bring in, could get a little work--only a few hours, no more. During the hours when the girls are in school. In this way I could help Victor--but only for this reason, to help us get ahead a little.

"We have to combine our efforts to make a little more. It has to be done in such a way that no one is inconvenienced--the children or the house--and so there's no trouble between Victor and me. So we are in agreement --so it's not something I want but my husband doesn't. It's very hard if one is complaining in one way or another, or there's a disagreement between husband and wife. I've seen this in other families. I know wives and husbands who both work and have children. And on many occasions the husband is at home when the wife is working so there's no problem. This way the husband gets the chance to get involved with the children and cope with their problems--many times they have no idea what this is like. They come home from work and don't know what the children have been doing all day or even part of it. Then if the children shout he doesn't like it, true? But when the fathers are with their children a while they understand all about this and they have a part in directing their children. So it's possible to find a way to help each other."

Juanita finishes her thoughts on the matter by saying: "Well, it's most important that husband and wife feel the same about this, pay their bills and all. If there isn't a solution except for her to go to work, then they should find a way for her to do it part time, no more."

Community. The Rodriguez family doesn't get involved with the neighborhood very much, but they see that there are many robberies and fires. Also, they know that marijuana is used in the area. According to Victor those who are interested in what is happening could go and talk to the neighbors and see if they could get more information about these things. "This would be very important to do," says Victor. "To protect the children one needs to be active and try to get together with the neighbors and find a way to stop these robberies and fires we're having."

From Juanita's perspective, "One thinks a lot about this because one sees much, right? Before, one never even noticed if someone had, or didn't have, marijuana. Or, one didn't notice because it was hidden. It wasn't so 'out in the open' as it is now. One doesn't want to be in bad with the neighbors but one sees things at other homes, what the children are doing--using drugs or other things that aren't good. It's always hard to report it to the authorities, because one doesn't want to get involved in the difficulties. But if they are going to do damage one will have to say something to protect the children. We live in a neighborhood where there's all of this and if these problems come, well, we'll make the sacrifice and leave if there isn't any other solution. We're going to take our children out of this environment so they don't get into these habits or have such things near.

"But many times this doesn't solve anything. One has to educate the child; teach him what's good and bad and what is damaging to him. One can't change a way of thinking: children learn the road they'll want to take as they grow up. One can't stop them but one can teach them and expose them to things, like drugs and all. This isn't all. I believe in trying to solve things by staying in the neighborhood and doing what I can to help others who are doing these bad things. If this doesn't work, well, then one has to leave. The most important thing is to see to our children, isn't that so? And then to try to help the neighborhood, and talk, if it can be done, to the parents; get them together and arrange something. This is most important, right?"

Trip to Mexico. Recently Victor and Juanita Rodriguez decided to travel to Mexico to visit with their relatives, but their older daughter, Priscilla, didn't want to go. She told them that she didn't like Mexico because it is so poor and, anyway, she couldn't speak Spanish. Victor pointed out that in this case they had to consider the child's age. A small child would just be taken with her parents. For an older child, it would be better to leave her with some relatives, or something like that, because she just wouldn't be happy going. That was all that they considered at the time. "Well," added Victor, "we had a conference, Juanita and I, to see what ideas we had and then put them together to come up with a possible solution."

Juanita smiled and said: "Well, it would be a good experience for a child. Let's suppose that she was a little older, a young lady--it would be even better for her to go and see all there is in Mexico. She'd learn about the differences between the U.S. and Mexico, and what advantages there are here. And, yes, she'd see the poverty there. And she could also learn the language--her native language. I hope she'd be interested, so she can see how they talk in Mexico--different from us here. Because we speak slang Spanish many times and murder the Englih besides. But in Mexico they speak beautifully, very correctly. Well, not on the border, for sure. There it's like here, but in the interior of the country.

"Well, I thought it was right to make her go because she'd like it and be interested in the Mexican culture; she'd learn all there was to see. Then she'd appreciate more the opportunities she has here, and she'd see how things would be if she was there instead. But always I thought, as I've said, that this was something Priscilla had to get herself involved in, and get to know--her Mexican culture."

Juanita continues: "Of course, if she opposed it very much and there was someone to leave her with, she wouldn't have gone. But it wouldn't be right for us parents not to be able to go because of her. We wanted to go; there were relatives we didn't even know at the time in Mexico. So she could stay if she didn't want to go but we wouldn't. Most important, I think, was to help her to see how lovely it is there and that it would add to her education to go. We tried to win her over this way."

Illness. The Rodriguez'younger daughter, Isabelita, had an operation and didn't feel any better afterwards. The doctor told Victor and Juanita that he couldn't assure them that she would be well after a second operation. Says Victor "The children are most important. I believe if you don't have what they need you get it so you don't end up without any children. You have to take better care of your children than anything else. That's about it."

"Well," explains Juanita, "we saw other doctors, three or more. . . they didn't all think alike. Some gave us other possible explanations and advice. Naturally, it would have been very bad for Isabelita to submit to another operation and not get any benefit from it. So they weren't permitted to do it. But we didn't lose hope because there have been many advances in medicine, in medical science. We knew there were many places where they specialized in different things. So we tried to find some help and didn't lose hope that something could be done. This was the most important thing we did--looked for help and didn't lose hope until we found someone who could help the child."

Family Size. When the Rodriguez family are with the grandparents, Francisco and Flora, they often hear them say: "Life is worthless without many children." Victor and Juanita know how they feel but they already have two daughters and don't care to have more children. Victor says this is up to them--the older folks shouldn't have anything to say about how many children he and Juanita will have. So he and Juanita talked it over and then talked to Francisco and Flora and tried to explain their ideas and that the decision was their own to make.

Says Juanita: "It seems to me we are very fortunate to have the methods and opportunity to limit our family. We never did before. It used to be a woman had all the children God sent her, right? She had no way to prevent pregnancy. But now we have the number of children we want and can feed. Even if one wanted to, there isn't any way to support a large family in these times. One wants to give the children every opportunity; so even if a large family is lovely, it's expensive and difficult to maintain in this world. It's just not right to have too many children. It's hard for the woman for her health, and hard for the other children. It's easy to take care of this today with help in many quarters, from the doctor and all. The means are easy to get and use to limit the family."

Continuing her thoughts, Juanita suggests: "Husband and wife need to come to an agreement and the decision is theirs. Naturally the grandparents think

differently, in terms of their own days. They believe it's a sin not to permit all the children God would send to be born. But we think differently today and we have to look at the disadvantages which having a big family brings. It's most important for the wife or the husband to work this out definitely. Take pills, for example, which could have consequences for the woman's health. He or she could have an operation. But they can solve this for sure."

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DECISION PROFILE 4: THE SALAZAR FAMILY

The Salazar household includes Ramon, the father, age 42; Anna, the mother, age 38; 16-year-old Rita; 11-year-old Eddie and 6-year-old Miguel. They have been living on a yearly income of $7,000. Both Ramon and Anna were born, raised and educated in Mexico. Ramon studied pharmacy but since he came to Arizona he has never been able to complete or use his training. His wife studied to be a secretary and graduated with a high school diploma before moving to Arizona.

Mr. and Mrs. Salazar are concerned about the cost of living and about how their children get along. They like to talk to them about school and about how it was when they were young and in school in Mexico. These things and other family matters are sometimes discussed when they go to visit Anna's parents who are living nearby.

Family Size. Pedro and Blanca Inez, the grandparents, will often say: "For a family, life is lost if there aren't many children around." Ramon and Anna know what their desires are: to have more grandchildren; but with the family they already have, Ramon and Anna don't care to have any more children. Says Ramon: "If a family has only one or two, they could have three or four or five kids without too many problems. Six or eight kids--that's too many to be able to take care of. You don't really have to think much about it: the less there are, the better education can be given them."

Ramon shrugs and continues: "To . . . to change this just to satisfy a desire for many children? Well, it's all right to say it's a blessing from heaven, but only to a certain point, I'll tell you. Only to a certain point. If you have ten, maybe 12 children, you're going to have headaches trying to take care of them. And right now it's getting more and more expensive to give them a good education. I should know; my daughter Rita is in high school and the costs are enough to make me lose the few hairs I've got left! It's my opinion that Don Pedro and Dona Blanca Inez ought not to talk so much about this, that's all I can say."

For her part, Anna agrees: "Grandparents may think 'Ah, yes, more children!' But it's my thought that the fewer there are the better you can raise them. The more there are, the poorer they are; there is more suffering, more hunger. The times are a little more modern than in my parents' day. Well, going back to their opinion, well, truly Mexican families always pay a lot of attention to what grandparents say. It's difficult, difficult to be opposed to their will or opinions. But more than anything, a married couple must see to the security of their own immediate family. This, even before the desires of grandparents, who, we could say, form another family apart from us. They shouldn't interfere; it is Ramon who has to support our family and he is the one who has to decide how many children there will be. Yes, everyone needs to keep to their own interests. . . ."

Economic Situation. Recently Ramon became unemployed after a layoff. Thus, the family income has declined but prices of everything have been rising. In addition the family is trying to pay for furniture which they bought on credit some time ago. Ramon hopes to be working again soon and Anna has considered getting a job, but if they both work they won't have much time to be with the children.

"It's a difficult situation, I can tell you," Ramon admits. "Young children need their mother's care, and if the father has work that doesn't pay much, it's hard to keep up with the cost of living. What can be done? I could look for better work but I don't have the strength for a job if it's too hard. . . . We could get a housekeeper to take care of the children and Anna could help me with expenses. . . . For sure, we won't buy any more on credit because that means more to pay off."

Thoughtfully, he continues: "The large family can go to a charitable society or government agencies, and honestly and sincerely talk to them about help, because it's a real need, for sure. The children can't be left alone or hungry. It seems to me that parents ought to talk about this before it happens; that is before there are ten or 12 children. . . . Well, once God gives them, he gives them, right? A family of four or five is great, but no more, so you can take care of them and educate them without all kinds of sacrifices. We Mexicans have, as you say, a tendency to be prolific--families of ten, twelve. Even when there is only one bean in the kitchen pot, you understand! I think the best thing for me to do is to look for a better job and if that doesn't work, we can look for outside help through a charitable society."

Anna Salazar took up the discussion at this point. "Hum, well, Ramon should work, but not me. A mother provides the love for the home and children; she waits for them after school. . . . If they're all in school, a mother could work part-time. But no more; not and keep a happy marriage, no. Another thing that could help us, that's if my parents would come over to the house and stay until the children come home from school. But the love of a parent still has to be there. . . . As I said before, you don't see just grown children here, so I have to stay here and not go to work, for sure. Ramon, as the man of the house, and maybe our oldest girl, Rita, can work. My parents are already too old to help out. But Ramon and Rita, yes."

Anna reemphasizes her position: "I can't leave the house, that's it. When mothers do there's all kinds of delinquency. The children don't go to school, they go to other houses, other backyards. Why? Because there's nobody at home to love them, to give them direction, to cook for them and take care of them if they get sick. My parents could be here, but they've already raised their children and now have time for themselves, not for looking after our children. . . . A father has to go to work and then come home to the family, but it's different for a mother; she has to be in the house, to see what's needed, to take care of everything and everybody. The children grow up and go off to other parts, to the university or wherever, but when they come home their mother will still be here, watching for them."

School. Eddie's little brother, Miguel, began school this year. The teachers put him in a class of children who are slow learners. Ramon and Anna see that he seems to be advancing faster than the others in his class. Miguel always finishes his work before all the rest. His father wants some verification that what Miguel says is true: "He comes home and says he finishes first; but we'll go to check with the teachers and see if they say it's so--that he finishes more quickly than

all the rest. That would indicate that his mind is really developing rapidly and that he needs to have better opportunities, not to stand still. That's it, we go talk with the teachers and not just take the boy's word for it . . . . And if they say he can do the work we'll talk to the one in charge so he moves up to the next grade!"

Anna agrees: "We'll go with Eddie--who says he finishes his work faster than the others. How can one know he's really more advanced? The only thing to do is go talk to his teacher, I imagine. Then if she doesn't decide to give him the place he ought to have, we'll talk to the principal and call his attention to the fact that Eddie here is being held back, and only because he doesn't get the attention he deserves: that in spite of his intelligence he'll never progress if they keep making him stay back in a class of slow kids. That won't help him ever."

Anna nods firmly and continues: "In my opinion there are many things we can do about this. As a mother, I have my own problems with the school. . . . This child is wasting his time. We, his parents, will have to be firm with the teachers. If they don't make a change, he'll always (even if he passes from grade to grade) continue with that same class. We're not going to have him like a retarded child; Eddie's not retarded. They need to give him a test in a different school so he's in the grade where he ought to be. In this, it's the child who's more important, who suffers. The best thing is to take him out of that school. If we don't, there's no way around the teachers' authority at all, no! If they won't change him, there are other schools he can go to."